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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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COTTON MARKETING SERVICES, MARKETING RESEARCH, AND NEW USES PROGRAMS

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My remarks will be limited to a brief outline of some of the important phases of our service, regulatory, and research work relating to cotton. These include standardization and classing, quality and price statistics, fiber and spinning testing, research on ginning, packaging, automatic sampling, and related subjects, and programs designed to encourage increased consumption.

Official standards for cotton were first promulgated some 30 years ago. Since that time the standards have been improved and supplemented from time to time, and they are now in general use not only in the United States but throughout the world wherever American cotton is spun. In fact many of the leading cotton trade and manufacturers' organizations in other countries have adopted our universal standards for the grade of American upland cotton. Thousands of official grade boxes and staple types are prepared each year and shipped to classifiers and others in the United States and throughout the world. The standardization authority is contained in the United States Cotton Standards Act and Cotton Futures Act.

The demand for official classification of cotton has increased steadily until now our employees each year are classing samples representing more than six million bales of cotton. One of our largest classing jobs is that under the Act of April 13, 1937, which makes provision for a free classing service for farmers who are members of groups organized to promote the improvement of cotton. Since this work was undertaken, in 1938, it has become very popular with farmers, the volume of classing having increased from considerably less than 100,000 bales classed in 1938 to the point where we are now classing each year well over three and a quarter million bales, for nearly 300,000 individual farmers whose reported cotton acreage is in excess of 40 percent of the total cotton acreage of the United States. In order to be eligible for the free classing service, farmers must organize an improvement group and arrange for their sampling agency to send samples to one of our classing offices. On receipt by the classing office the samples are classed and an individual certificate showing the grade and staple length of each sample is returned to the farmer. Spot prices at various principal markets are sent to the organized groups and arrangements have been made for radio broadcasts of futures prices several times a day. With this classification and price information in hand

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the farmer can intelligently market his cotton. If such a service could be extended to all other cotton farmers and provision made for the classification of a representative sample from each bale ginned, various benefits to cotton growers in general could be expected. More specifically, the production of higher qualities of cotton throughout the belt would be encouraged; excessive sampling materially reduced or eliminated, and many farmers who are not now in position to obtain official classifications would be furnished specific information on each bale which would enable them to market their cotton according to its actual grade and staple length.

In addition to the classing work already mentioned, we are classing large quantities of cotton for Commodity Credit Corporation loan and purchase programs, for deliveries on futures contracts, and for other purposes. A considerable volume of classing work is also done by licensed classers in private employment who are under our supervision.

Under legislation passed in 1927, we are required to issue statistics or estimates of the grades and staple lengths of cotton carried over each year as of August 1, and also from time to time estimates of the qualities of cotton in the current crop as ginned. The estimates of the quality of current ginnings are based on the classification of samples from all bales ginned by selected gins representing about 10 percent of the total. Classification results have been returned to the ginner for his and his customers' use. Statistics on the quality of cotton by States and districts are issued to the public each ginning period. These quality estimates, along with the free classing service for farmers who are members of organized improvement groups, have contributed to cotton quality consciousness in the South and to improvement in the cotton crop. The average staple length of the crop has increased from slightly less than 15/16 inch in 1929 to about 1 inch in 1944. The cotton quality statistics and those compiled in our cotton market news work have made important contributions to the planning of various war and other programs.

Research designed to develop improved methods and reduce costs is conducted on the conditioning, ginning, cleaning, packaging, handling and marketing of cotton. The work on ginning and related processes is conducted in co-operation with the Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils and Agricultural Engineering--that organization being responsible for the mechanical engineering phases and our own organization for the effects of the use of various types of equipment and processes on the quality of cotton and on marketing.

At present, primary emphasis is being placed on problems of ginning, marketing, and processing incident to the adoption of mechanical harvesting. A special study of the possibilities of cleaning the lint between the gin stand and the bale press has recently been undertaken. Studies already made have indicated the mechanical and economic feasibility of gin presses capable of producing bales of standard density which would obviate the need

for recompression of bales for domestic shipment. Two commercial installations of these presses have been made and have proved a success under commercial conditions. Various other accomplishments of our research people hold considerable promise for the future. Among these is an automatic sampling device which makes it possible to obtain a truly representative sample of all of the cotton in a bale as it is formed at the gin and which obviates the need for cutting the bales for samples. This sampling device can be installed with standard gin equipment. It diverts, at intervals throughout the ginning of the bale, a portion of the lint from the lint flue through a special duct to a small scale condenser which condenses the lint into a bat similar to that fed into the bale press. The pressing equipment for the sample is rotated automatically with the turning of the bale press. The sample obtained by this equipment represents the cotton throughout the entire bale rather than just the cotton on the two sides of the bale as is the case with the present system of sampling. The eventual wide-spread use of higher density gin presses and automatic sampling devices, along with the standardization of cotton bale covering materials and perhaps net weight trading in cotton, should contribute measurably to economies in cotton handling, and should go a long way toward improving the physical appearance of the American bale.

A new and important phase of the work of our cotton fiber and spinning laboratories is the testing on a fee basis of the physical properties of cotton fibers such as strength, fineness, maturity, and uniformity, and the performance of particular cottons through manufacturing processes. These tests are made for cotton breeders, producers, manufacturers, and others, and are proving helpful in evaluating the qualities of new varieties and strains in the early stages of development and in aiding cotton merchants and manufacturers in locating those varieties and growths of cotton most suitable for specific uses.

Our laboratories are also conducting, on a cooperative basis, the testing for the Federal and State agricultural experiment stations in connection with their cotton breeding work and for their annual tests to determine the relative merits of the principal improved varieties and strains of cotton under the growth conditions prevailing in the various producing areas.

An important by-product of our extensive fiber and spinning testing activities has been the accumulation of what is perhaps the largest and best body of data on fiber properties and spinning performance in existence. Statistical analyses are now in progress to establish the relationships of the various measurable fiber properties to processing performance and to yarn and fabric quality. Facts concerning these relationships will indicate to cotton breeders those fiber properties that should be incorporated in the new varieties and strains being developed, and will aid spinners in selecting cottons needed for best results in the manufacture of various types of cotton goods.

Our Utilization and Diversion Division conducts programs designed to encourage increased consumption of cotton and cotton products and to bridge the gap between the laboratory stage of development and the commercial acceptance on a self-sustaining basis of new uses for cotton. Examples of these programs are those undertaken to encourage the use of cotton for insulation, cotton wrappers for cotton bales, and cotton for binder twine. The cotton insulation program offers promise of a new annual outlet for perhaps several hundred thousand bales of the lower grades and shorter staples. Some projects have had to be held in abeyance because of the war.

We shall be glad to supply more complete information on any phase of our work or to assist the Committee in any way that may be desired.